

Contants

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SCS #1009

1. Straying State & Condition of
Mankind Sinners. 1st & 3^d by
M^r Tho^s Boston. also 2^d
The fulness of the Godhead
dwelling in Christ, by an Act of
the Father's Good-pleasure. By
M^r H. Davidson Min^r at Galesh.
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*The straying State and Condition of mankind Sinners,
together with the Care of the chief-Shepherd in
returning them; and curing their straying Dis-
position.*

IN TWO

S E R M O N S,

From 1 P E T. ii. 25.

Preached at *Gallasbiels*, on a sacramental Occasion,
in the Year 1720.

By the REV.

Mr. *T H O M A S B O S T O N*,

Minister of the Gospel at *Ettrick*.

A L S O,

*The fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Christ, by an
Act of the Father's Good-pleasure.*

B E I N G A N

A C T I O N S E R M O N,

From C O L O S. i. 19.

Preached at *Gallasbiels*, in the Year 1720:

By the Rev. Mr. *H E N R Y D A V I D S O N*,

Minister of the Gospel there.

[Never before Published.]

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S E R M O N I.

On the Saturday.

I PETER ii. 25.

For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

ADAM's sons, as inheritors of their father's folly, are born wanderers; and ever since he brake over the hedge of God's covenant, into the Devil's common, they are wandering from mountain to mountain, having forgotten their resting place. And because a wandering disposition is natural unto them, therefore they cannot return until they be returned, as in my text, *But now are returned, &c.* The fallen angels are left to be miserable wanderers; so the scripture represents them, *walking about going to and fro*; they are straying wretches, but the great Shepherd has no commission to gather them; but they stray and will stray, until they be shut up in the pit; they stray without any seeking after them, but Jesus Christ is the Shepherd of Adam's sons, some of whom are returned to him already.

I have spoken to these words already at some length, in the hearing of severals that are here, at an occasion of this nature, therefore I shall not repeat what I have said, only I'll remind you, that by the sheep is meant, straying and lost sinners; by the Shepherd is meant, the Lord Jesus Christ, he only is the good Shepherd, who giveth his life for the sheep; and by returning unto him is meant, believing in him; and, when it is said, ye are returned, this intimates, that it is not in your power to return of yourselves.

The doctrine I purpose to speak to at this time, is shortly this,

DOCT. *All that are in Christ are as waffs and strays found and recovered by divine grace.*

I have spoken to the straying state, and to the return of the strays, in several distinctions. What I would repeat at this time is, the place where they are straying.

All the sons of *Adam* are straying upon the mountains of darkness, in a blind and ignorant state, among the pleasures and profits of this world; they are straying upon the barren mountains of the law; they are straying in the miry and marshy places of the earth, I mean the pollutions of this world.

What I would speak to at this time is,

I. To shew the condition of sinners out of Christ,

II. The cause of their continued straying.

III. Of the strays returned unto Christ.

I. I would shew the condition of sinners out of Christ,

I entered upon this, and shewed you it was, 1st, A lost state. 2^{dly}, A friendless state. 3^{dly}, A defenceless state. 4^{thly}, A famishing state. I now go on,

5^{thly}, The condition of straying sinners, is a restless condition. Poor straying creatures, ye are like the silly straying sheep, ay wandering, and every one thinks himself set at liberty, *Jer. v. 6. My people have been as lost sheep, they have forgotten their resting place.* Poor straying souls are like the troubled sea that cannot rest, &c. The soul of man, as to its natural make and constitution, can never have solid rest but in the enjoyment of God, so far as God hath made it capable of an infinite good. The soul of man fell out of its rest, and God has condemned it to a perpetual restlessness in these respects. 1st, In a straying conscience no rest for their souls, because the sting of guilt galls the heart, *Job xv. 32. He wandereth abroad for bread, but where is it?*

it? It is true, it may be a long time before the poison begins to work resolutely in the mans breast; but however, straying sinners can never get it purged out, until they return to the blood of sprinkling; but their way is to the mountains of the law; they lay themselves down upon the dust, to mend and grow better; but behold the curse coming from it, allows them no rest: So that you see, the soul can get no rest until it get into the wounds of a Redeemer. But then, 2dly, It is a restless condition, for a sinner can never have his desires satisfied; and what is wanting by lawful enjoyment, they endeavour to make up by unlawful. Oftentimes the poor creature thinks he will get rest in such and such a creature-enjoyment, and he comes forward to rest thereon; but behold he meets with a disappointment, *the bed is shorter than that he can stretch himself thereon, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself therein.* The truth is, the heart can never get solid rest, but in the enjoyment of God in Christ; and as we were born crying, so ye shall have complaining, and disappointments, ever till you center there: and hence it is that the soul of man can never get rest while out of Christ; it must have rest, and it will have rest, but this rest cannot be gotten in the creature; whatever it is that they essay to lay themselves down upon, still there is a thorn of uneasiness, and so they get up and wander again. But then,

6thly, A straying condition is a perishing condition; the soul that is out of Christ is like a straying sheep in the wilderness full of pits and snares, there wolves and foxes are wandering for their prey; Deut. xxxii. 10. *He found him in a desert land, in the waste and howling wilderness.* Such a creature is in no greater hazard of perishing, than the soul out of Christ is. Alas! the world is full of snares, you cannot set down a foot any where, but there is a trap for them; in the pleasantest places of the mountains of vanity, there are Lyons dens, and mountains of leopards. In a word, The poor sinner's straying places are the Devil's ranging places;

places; there the roaring lion ranges about *seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. v. 8. I may take this up in two things. 1. You are ready to perish, *Luke xv. 17. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants are in my father's house, who have bread enough and to spare; and I perish with hunger!* Poor straying sinners, you may make the *Israelite's* confession, when he offered his basket of first-fruits, *An Assyrian ready to perish was my father*; so is the case of every soul out of Christ: you have not the promise of one moments security, you are like *David's* lamb, in the power of the devouring lion; there is only one thing wanting, he hath not yet carried you away to his den; *Isa. xlix. 24. Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?* Therefore, I say, they are always ready to perish. But then in the 2d place, They shall certainly perish, if they be not returned; *Acts iv. 12. Neither is there salvation in any other, &c.* Sinners if you be not returned, you shall be carried down to the den of perdition: this is the end of a straying state, both by the appointment of God, and also from the nature of the thing, *Mark xvi. 16. He that believeth not, shall be damned.* So much for the straying state and condition you are in.

II. In the second place, I would offer some of the causes of your continued straying. I shall name these two.

1st, They stray and stray on until they be returned; because they are inquisitive of happiness, and are quite blind as to the way that leads to it, *Eccl. x. 15, The labour of the foolish weareth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.* Man naturally seeks to be happy, and in no case does he cease to desire to be so; he is conscious to himself, that he is not self-sufficient, and that of necessity he must fetch his happiness from some other without him. Now, man naturally knows not God, and the only way to happiness through our Lord Jesus Christ: hence man goes to
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the creature to seek his happiness; and the soul wanders from one to another, meeting with disappointments at all hands, because the soul is empty, and every one disappoints it.

2dly, They are wild and wilful, and will not return; *John v. 10. Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life.* They like not the relish of the green pasture; for their natures are quite changed, and nothing but what is agreeable to corrupt nature relisheth with them; and so straying becomes their choice: they not only cannot return, but they will not return; they cannot think to be hedged in within God's inclosure; and there is such a multitude of things in the world; that every one helps another, and they scorn to return to Christ.

III. The third thing proposed, was to speak of the returned strays. This is a weighty point, several things in it I cannot reach, time not allowing: what I would speak a little to is, How they are returned. Remember, Sirs, all mankind are strays by nature, and remain many days in the pit: many of them are never recovered, nor turned back; but, blessed be God, some are returned and recovered out from among the rest; *Ye were sometimes going astray, but are now returned, &c.* The subject of our present enquiry is, How this is effected: we shall take it up in *three* things.

In the *first* place know, that there was from all eternity a solemn transaction between the Father and the Son, for the recovery of the straying sheep; a grand devise set on foot by free and undeserved love: and the Son of God was constitute as the rightful Shepherd of the returned strays, and that by the original Owner. Now here there are some things to be done, *first* on the Father's part, and *secondly* on the part of the Shepherd. Now there are two things with respect to the returned strays on the Father's part, and that from the date of eternity.

1st, He marked them out from eternity for recovery by electing love: I say, he marked them out from among

mong the rest of the strays for recovery, by free and undeserved love : he set so many by, and marked them out, for his own Son; the great Shepherd of the sheep, *Eph. ii. 3. 4.* And that invisible mark which they carry about with them, they can never lose, in all their straying and wanderings, however dangerous places they go through, and however careless they be of themselves, *2 Tim. ii. 19. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.* The mark is internal to the party marked, and to others, till the strays be returned. But,

2dly, He delivered you over to his Son, the good Shepherd, for recovery ; you were delivered over to him to bring your recovery about, to begin it, to carry it on, and to complete it : the Father gave him a right to them, he made a gift of the strays to the Son, burdening him with their recovery, and burdening him with the expence of their recovery. It is true, he made over a kingdom, but it was to be gathered out of the Devil's fold ; he made a gift of a flock, but it was to be raised out of the Devil's strays : the gift had that burden with it, and none was able to bear it, but he ; *Psal. lxxxix. 19. Then spakest thou in vision to thy holy One, and said, I have laid help on One that is mighty ; I have exalted One chosen out of the people.* So much for the Father's part. But then there is something on the Shepherd's part, and that from eternity also : As,

1st, He engaged to bring them back ; *John x. 11.* compared with *ver. 13. The good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. No man taketh it from me, &c.* Justice had a claim against the strays marked out for recovery, as well as against the rest of the strays ; because they had broken over God's inclosure, in the loins of Adam ; and by breaking over the hedge and inclosure, they are out of access to return. Justice demanded them to be hunted, pursued, and slain wherever they could be found, as they were runaways from their righteous Lord and Owner ; and *without the shedding of*

of blood there was no remission of sin ; then says the Shepherd, Stop justice, hold thy hand ; I will lay down my life for the strayed sheep, those whom my Father hath given me ; I will make up the gap in the hedge of the inclosure, which they have made down ; I will be hunted, pursued, and slain instead of the poor strays ; *Psal. xl. 7. Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not : Then said I, Lo, I come.* He engaged to bring back the stray'd sheep ; *John x. 16. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them I must bring back.* Remark the expression, *them I must bring back* : There lay an engagement upon him to bring them back ; the poor strays, though access be purchased to them, yet they cannot return : they cannot come back, they are so fond on the mountains of vanity they cannot come back, and so they will ever stray on endlessly ; and therefore Jesus Christ the great Shepherd engaged to bring them back. So much for the first thing.

-2dly, In the fulness of time, Jesus Christ the good Shepherd, purchased the life and return of the strays by his own doing and dying for them ; the good Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep, according to the eternal compact. The word was given, *Zech. xiii. 11. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against him that is my fellow* ; and then justice pursued him from the cradle to the grave, and did not leave him, till it brought him to the dust of death. The Shepherd stood in the gap the strays had made in the first inclosure, namely, the covenant of works ; and for the making it up, two things was demanded, and he answered in both, *viz.* obedience and suffering, both which was necessary to the making up the hedge the strays had broken down. The waters of the curse, a flood of wrath, which would have swept all the strays away before it for evermore, brake out at the gap, it overflowed him, sunk into his very soul, even to the very last drop ; but they were all swallowed up in him, because of the excellency of him that stood in the gap, to make up the breach. Thus much for the *second* thing, *viz.* His
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procuring

procuring the life and return of the strays, in the fulness of time.

3dly; In the time of life, he by the strength of his Holy Spirit, and the influences of divine grace, actually returns the strays, and brings them back from the mountains of vanity, and brings them home to God the righteous owner, into the inclosure of the second covenant, and into God's flock. And here there are four or five things remarkable.

1. The Shepherd's voice is heard upon the mountains, calling them to return; *Isa. lii. 7. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, &c.* The gospel of peace sounds their ears, in order to bring them back to take hold of God's covenant, and to return to the Shepherd. And the Shepherd seeks them out of whatever corner of the world they be in; and his voice is heard, which is not heard in other places of the world. But alas! the poor straying sheep, they care not for the Shepherd's voice, they will not return; and so they stray on: *Hos. xi. 17. My people are bent to backsliding from me.*

2. The Shepherd hunts and pursues the strays, that they can get no rest until they return; *Gal. iii. 24. Wherefore the law was our school-master to bring us unto Christ.* These same strays, when they were going at ease, among the the rest of the Devil's strays, before ever they be aware, an awakened conscience is set upon them, and they are pricked at the heart.

3. A spirit of bondage seizes upon them, and they are afraid at the Lyons dens, and mountains of the leopards; where before they transversed among the strays, now they run for their life, with a sad heart, about the mountains of vanity, the marshy places and pollutions of the world; just because they can get them brooked no longer, at any tolerable ease: But go they on to the Shepherd? No, no; that is the last shift they will take, and when they can do no otherwise; but they run to the barren mountains of the law, and here the strays fall a-working for their life; and sometimes they get some skulking holes of ease.

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4. The chase is begun again, and they can get no ease, let them travel all the parts of the mountains, they are ay frightened away; and the Shepherd of their souls, in mercy to their souls, makes the straying places too hot for them; and in this case, what should come of them, but that they should either be struck through with torment, or enter into despair; or resolutely go back to the mountains of vanity, and marshy places and pollutions of the world again, and make the best of them they can.

5. They come towards the inclosure, even the blessed covenant of grace, by the powerful voice of the good Shepherd of their souls, weary and heavy laden with their long and tedious journey on the barren mountains of the law; *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* to your souls: Now this is an alluring sweetness to souls, when they are ready to say of the Shepherd and his voice, as in the 45th Psalm, *Thou art fairer than the sons of men.* And because they are in view of the new inclosure, their souls cry out within them, *Thou art more glorious than the mountains of vanity!* And so the powerful voice of the Shepherd makes them willing to return; *A willing people shall come unto thee in the day of thy power.* Thus the day of power makes them willing to be brought under the Shepherd's hand. Alas! what should come of them, their weak and trembling legs are not able to come to him, and so they lay themselves down at the door of the sheep-fold, at that pass, saying, *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God.*

6. But in the sixth and last place, the Shepherd puts forth his hand and draws them within the inclosure; *Luke xv. 3. 5.* Christ communicates of his Spirit to them, which is a Spirit of grace, and so they come to Christ by a day of his power; and by Jesus Christ they come to the Father. So much how the strays are returned, and now I go on to the application of what has been said: and first a word to unconverted sinners, who are

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straying;

straying to this day ; and next a word to the returned strays.

First to unconverted sinners it says two things.

1st, Your state is certainly dangerous ; O that you would see and believe it in time ; poor sinners, young strayers, and old strayers that are yet out of Christ, that have strayed away from God ; if you knew your condition, you would see it to be a lost condition, a friendless condition, a famishing condition, a restless and a perishing condition. What security can you have for a moment's safety ? thou art every moment in hazard of falling into the pit, and of falling a sacrifice to vindictive justice, and ready to be a prey to the devourer of souls ; and to be let fall into the bottomless pit, if you be not recovered and returned. But,

2^{dly}, This day there is ground of hope to you ; this doctrine affords two of them. 1. It holds forth to you, that however far you have strayed from God, the great Shepherd can bring you in : you may be recovered by divine grace. All that are now within the sheep-fold, within God's inclosure, feeding upon the green pastures, were once strays as well as you. Sometime a-day, they were scattered abroad upon the Devil's common, even as you are : and does not that say there is hope concerning your case. Look to the saints on earth, behold them, all glorious ; with the mark of holiness upon them, in comparison of the rest of the world : Ay, but they were all brought from among the strays. Look up to the holy hill of God, to the saints in glory ; and for as bright as they are sparkling this day, they were once among the Devil's strays ; they were once ill favoured and lean creatures as well as you ; wandering among the mirry and marish places of the earth ; but they were helped out and returned by divine grace. But then, 2: No thanks to themselves that they are returned ; they were all healed and recovered by divine grace : they would have strayed on to everlasting destruction, among the rest of the straying world : But thanks to free and sovereign grace, that powerfully and efficaciously

ciously wrought the recovery. Remember, Sirs, *Tit. iii. 5. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, &c.* My beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ has not done all his work yet, as to the bringing up of the strays from the pit into which they are fallen : No, for the cord is this day hanging down to the pit of sin and misery, where the sinners are this day lying ; and they are called to take hold on it : O then take hold of the cord, and live : He is carrying on the work, Sirs ; but alas ! it goes but slowly on in our day ; *Joel ii. 32. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered : for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance : and on the Lord shall all call.* But there are two or three objections, that straying sinners make, which I will remove.

OBJECT. I. I have strayed far away, there is no hope of my recovery.

Ans. Many have strayed as far, and yet were brought back ; *2 Cor. vi. 9. Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor idolaters, &c. ver. 11. And such were some of you ; but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of God.* And put the case, these had never strayed so far as you, yet the blood of Christ is of infinite value and merit to purchase your recovery ; and the Spirit of Christ is of infinite power and efficacy to bring about your recovery ; *1 John i. 7. And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* If the ocean were poured out on a house that is set on fire, it would quench it as soon as it would do the flame of a candle : and you know an angel can master a giant as easy as a little child ; and so the blood of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ, the one of infinite value, and the other of infinite efficacy, can make the greatest strayers to return ; so that even they that have gone farthest astray, are often times recovered.

OBJECT. II. But I have been almost returned and
reco-

recovered, being brought many times within the door of the inclosure; but alas! I have run away again.

Ans. That is the case of backsliders, and it is dangerous indeed; but yet, *Jer. iii. 22. Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings*: free love is sufficient to answer all the objections of backsliders; *Hosea xiv. 4. I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely.* Ephraim was such an one; *Thou hast chastised me and I was chastised; he was as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke*; and when the yoke was half on, he ran away, yet was returned.

OBJECT. III. I fear I am none of the strays marked out for recovery.

Ans. Indeed this is an objection that dives very deep; what I would say to such as are under this temptation is, God is calling you this day to return; that is his plain revealed will; and it is intolerable boldness to pry into God's secret purposes; *Deut. xxix. 29. The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but the things that are revealed unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.* As for yourselves, it is a temptation from the Devil, and it is dangerous with whomsoever it is found; for it is a temptation to keep you from the thoughts of ever returning unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls: and if it prevail, it will eternally mar your return. I told you it was an invisible mark till once the strays were returned; and then indeed it is visible: Why then would you destroy your own cause in this matter? I charge you, in the Lord's name, to lay that aside, and fall to what is your immediate duty; and that is to return to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. I shall here tell you of two effects the invisible mark has, which perhaps may be of some use in this matter, to any labouring under this temptation. The first is, That it keeps the sinner from falling into the sin against the Holy Ghost, the unpardonable sin. In the midst of all the far lengths the strays may go, this invisible mark still keeps them from the sin unto death; while

while they fear only what they would fain have to be groundless. But a second effect is, It keeps in life ay and till free grace come in: and now poor sinner, God has not cut off thy life in the pit, neither has he buried thy hope under any grave-stone whatsoever; these may be ground of hope to you. So, I say, return to the Shepherd of your souls, and let no body stand in their own light, by making any such objections.

A word next to the returned strays.

You are going to the green pastures, that are prepared for them that are Christ's sheep; you are to be entertained with these green pastures, at the sacrament of the Lord's supper to-morrow, that once were strays as well as others. There is these *four* or *five* things I would have you to make of it.

1st, Strengthen your faith and confidence in your Shepherd; he has brought you back when you was quite gone astray from him. He brought you from the mountains of vanity; then assure yourselves, and strengthen your faith in him, when you are returning to him, and saying, *I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better with me then than now.*

2^{dly}, Let it inflame your hearts with love to Christ your Shepherd. O will you consider what the Lord has been pleased to do for you: *Look to the pit from whence you are digged, and to the rock from whence you are hewn.* Consider the times of love, when the Shepherd followed you, and returned you from the mountains of vanity. Consider sovereign grace, that was imployed that way, and ordained for your recovery. Look at it, and let it inflame your heart, with love to this great Shepherd.

3^{dly}, Let it excite you to repentance in your hearts: I know of nothing more ready to imbitter sin to gracious souls, than kindly reflections on the Lord's remembering us in our low estate; *Jer. ii. 3. Have I been a wilderness to Israel, or a land of darkness.*

4^{thly}, Let it be of use to stir you up to thankfulness: let it enlarge your hearts and mouths in the praises of God.

God. Consider, that the recovery was purchased by the precious blood of the Shepherd: consider the pains he was at in recovering you.

5thly, And lastly, let it fill you with gracious believing promises of new obedience, to return to the Shepherd, and stray no more.



PREFACE, by the Rev. Mr. HENRY DAVIDSON, before his Action Sermon.

IT would not be an unsuitable question to this multitude, *What has brought them here this day? And what is your errand in this place this day?* If you were to speak the language of your hearts, every one would give a different answer. The Psalmist's desire should be your desire, *Even to see the beauty of the Lord, and the brightness of his face in the sanctuary.* Now there are two frames of spirit, if they have been among you this last night, or this morning, I can promise you very much on this matter before you go.

1. If you have been in Jacob's posture, wrestling with the Angel until the dawning of the day, telling a holy God, with a holy boldness, that you would not come up to this place, unless he came along with you.

2. If you have been like the woman with the bloody issue, exercised under a sense of your vileness, ashamed to look God in the face, and so fetch a compass about to touch the hem of Christ's garment. The soul that has been arraigning and condemning itself before God, is the soul that may expect kindly entertainment: this is the great end of gospel-ordinances, that believers may come and touch Christ by faith. Now let your issue of blood be never so vile, let it have run never so long, one believing touch given to the Physician would soon bring in a cure.

S E R M O N II.

BEING THE

A C T I O N S E R M O N.

COLOS. i. 19.

For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.

TH E Apostle, after a preface, which continued to the 12th. verse of this chapter, offers praise for the great work of redemption : from the 15th verse he gives a description of the Redeemer in very glorious terms, he tells us, that he is *the image of the invisible God*, both the essential image of God, and the manifestative image of God-man in one person. In an image there must not only be a likeness, but an exact and perfect likeness and similitude; and it must be drawn from the person represented, not like an accidental resemblance between two men, but like the Son's resembling his father. He calls him *the first-born of every creature*, the great Head, the Lord of the whole creation. In the 16th verse, that he was the blessed Co-worker engaged with the Father in the work of creation, *for by him were all things made*, as the efficient cause, and *to him were all things made*, as the final cause. When God made the universe, even the whole creation, he bestowed this piece of glory on the incarnate Word. In the 17th verse he asserts his pre-existence of all things. He shows the kingdom of providence to be intrusted to his hands, and that *by him all things came to pass*; if he should lose but for a moment his almighty grip of the whole world, it would presently moulder into dust, and return into its first nothing again. In the 18th verse he further shows, that *he is the head of the body*; he is the head of the elect body, the precious generation of the saints; that he is the head of divine influences to the church, as the natural

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head is to the body, even so he is the head of the church, he is the head of government to the church, the legislative power is lodged in Christ's hand; he alone it is that has power to appoint, ordain, institute, &c. offices, and officers, ordinances, and institutions in his house; he is set over the house by his Father, and to him is the direction of every thing entrusted. Our Apostle goes forward and shews, how well furnished and well qualified he was for his work, and for being the head over the church, and shows how reasonable it was, that he who was *the first-born among many brethren*, should have *the pre-eminence in all things*, and that as the gift of a glorious fulness of qualifications that was lodged in him. In the words we have these five things.

1st, We have an account of a great blessing of fulness. Fulness is a great word, a taking word with the world; the worldly man is for a full table, for a full cup, for a full house, for a full family; ever since the fall of *Adam*, the heart of man is void and empty; it was once full, but now it is empty, and an empty stomach, you know, is always craving, as being sapless. The heart and mind of man is like the troubled sea, the waves whereof are never at rest, but still tossing themselves to some shore or other; so the heart of man, like the waves of the sea, is rolling from side to side through the whole creation for a shore to rest at; but the unhappiness is, they take up with a drop when they may have a full ocean, but here is fulness in the text to answer the heart and mind of man though never so empty.

2^{dly}, We have the extent of this fulness; that is another great word in the world's ears, *all fulness*; join *all* and *fulness* together, and it must be some great thing; there must be an *all fulness* to answer an *all* of wants; a fulness of all perfection to make the man completely happy. But then again you have,

3^{dly}, The house and seat of residence in which this fulness is to be found; and it is *in Him*, that great *Him*, that glorious *Him*, of whom so glorious things are spoken of in the context, even our Lord Jesus Christ, where only it is that all fulness is to be found; and we

humbly

humbly think, that we are not to understand Christ here merely as the second person of the Trinity : among other reasons for my thus thinking, there is one in the text, *viz.* That the fulness of all grace in Christ is ascribed to an act of the Father's good-pleasure ; were he to be understood in this text only as the second person of the Trinity, that fulness would be natural to him, so that this *fulness*, and *all fulness* spoken of in the text, is in the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, God-man, he is the great store-house of this all fulness.

4thly, We have the way and manner how this all fulness is in Christ ; *it dwells in him* : which points out duration and continuance.

5thly, You have the spring and original fountain of this fulness dwelling in Christ, and that is the *Father* ; *For it pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell.* These words, we own, are not in the original, but very justly are they insert here in our translation ; and that word *the Father*, is brought down from verse 12. *Giving thanks to the Father* : and that it was the Father's good-pleasure, an act of the Father's counsel and purpose : he not only fitted Christ for his work, but he did it with a mighty satisfaction and contentment ; and so he is not only the treasure of grace, but the object of the Father's delight.

For our better understanding of this fulness in the text, we are to know, that there is a threefold fulness ascribed to him in the Scriptures ; as *first*, There is a relative fulness in him. *Secondly*, There is a personal fulness. *Thirdly*, There is a dispensatory fulness in Christ.

1st, There is a relative or mystical fulness in Christ ; that is, the church of God, called in express terms *the fulness of Christ*. If you would make a perfect man, he must not only have a head but a body ; so our Lord Jesus Christ being a head, he must consequently have a body, and that is the church ; and every believer is a member of the mystical body, a part of the relative fulness of Christ ; and, if one saint were a-wanting Christ's mystical fulness, would not be complete ; a man wanting

but a joint of a finger would not be a perfect man; and one saint wanting one measure and degree of grace appointed him in the decree would mar the fulness of Christ: the church of believers is his declarative fulness, that declares and manifests him to believers, as an empty vessel thrown into a fountain, and giving the fountain occasion to show its fulness. The church of believers is Christ's outward fulness, and Christ is their inward fulness, supplying them and filling up all their wants; but that is not the fulness in the text.

2dly. There is a personal fulness said to be in Christ; *Colos. ii. 9. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*: he has all the divine perfections dwelling in him, he being God-man in one person; as the divine glory dwelt in and filled the temple at *Jerusalem*, so does the glory of the Lord, even a whole Godhead fill and dwell in the temple of Christ's human nature. The pillar of fire and cloud represented this; they were two distinct substances, and yet both made up but one, so there is two natures in Christ, and yet both in one person: there was the fire that pointed out his divine nature, and the cloud that pointed out his human nature. This personal fulness in the text is bottomless, and is the foundation of all other fulnesses fountained up in Christ. But this personal fulness is not the thing that is principally intended in this text. And therefore,

3dly. There is a dispensatory fulness (so called) in Christ; a fulness of life, of light, of grace; yea, a fulness of all things necessary for the redeeming and home-bringing of straying sinners; a fulness of all qualifications necessary to constitute an able and faithful Shepherd for his work; *John i. 14. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth*: observe the gradations of that text, the Son of God made flesh, our nature brought into an union with the second person of the glorious Trinity, and that human nature filled with a fulness of grace, and that fulness of grace was emptied into the vessels of
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souls of the elect ; *and out of his fulness do we receive grace for grace.* So much for the explanation of the words.

Doct. *It was an act of the Father's good-pleasure, to make all fulness dwell in the Lord Jesus Christ.* Or, in the very words of the text, *It pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell.*

In speaking to this doctrine, these things may be done.

I. Offer some accounts concerning this fulness in the text.

II. Show some of the properties of this fulness.

III. The reasons why this fulness was lodged in Christ.

IV. Give some accounts of the springs and original of this fulness, and of the Father's hand actually in sitting of Christ.

V. Lastly, Improve the whole.

I. As to the *first*, take the following accounts of this fulness in the following branches more generally. As,

First, There is a fulness of fitness in Christ to be the Mediator between God and man : very much depends upon a fit person to be employed to take away the difference between two jarring parties ; one word spoken by a fit hand, will do more to the removing of a difference between men, than a thousand entreaties by another person. You will see there was a fulness of fitness in Christ for that great work he was entrusted with ; there was a fulness of natures in him, that made him fully fit for his work : the human nature was in him, *he took flesh* ; it was organized flesh, not an undigested heap of matter ; it was a piece of flesh, exactly digested into the frame of a human body ; *A body hast thou prepared me.* It is very like that word was spoken from eternity, when Christ was taking a prospect of that fulness of fitness that was lodged in his hand ; all the natural properties, defections, and sinless infirmities of a body. Had he a soul also ? Yes ; but then together with this there was the divine nature ; he thought it not robbery

robbery to call himself equal with the Father ; there was an equality, identity and oneness of essence, as he was equal with his Father. There was never a time when it could be said, that the Father was not the Father ; and so consequently, not a period when it could be said, Christ was not the Son ; they were both from everlasting, both of the same standing, which could not but make him very fit for the work he was employed in. He was not putting so great a trust in the hand of a mere creature ; it was an honour too great for the creature to bear : to put an unfit, an insufficient person in an office of import, would be very ill management ; an office of honour and dignity when misplaced is very unbecoming, but his being very God and very man, made him every way fit for such a great undertaking : It was absolutely necessary, that he should be present at the drawing up of that everlasting covenant, and his being God made him a fit member of that great and honourable counsel ; and so he was standing by when that covenant was drawn up, to speak after the manner of men, for so we must speak in these matters ; he counselled with the Father, and the Father with him, about every article of that covenant, about the putting down of the names of the covenanted ones ; it made him fit for sealing the contract ; it would have been very unfit and improper, that the hand and seal of a mere creature should have been at such a honourable transaction ; his being God made him fit for so noble an office as the sealing that eternal covenant. Who so fit to be the church's teacher, as he who was the eternal counsellor, that lay from eternity in the Father's bosom, and knew all the secret measures and concerts in the counsel of peace ? Who so fit to be the High-priest over the house of God, as he who was the eldest son in the family ? Who so fit to be the church's King, as he who was God's own Son the heir of all things ? The human nature also added to his fulness of fitness for his work : Where could there have been a sacrifice found, if he had not had a body and a soul ? so that the human nature makes him personally fit for the great offices he is intrusted

trusted with. By these two natures he stands between the two parties, as an indifferent person, equally distinct from them both ; he has a prevailing interest in both, as being related to both sides ; he stands well affected to the union of both parties, for he is of kin to both, and so very fit to be intrusted with the concerns of his younger brethren ; and to be sure, he will not act party in the matter, for he stands engaged on both sides. So then there is a fulness of fitness in Christ for his work, in regard that there is a fulness of natures in his person.

Secondly, There is a fulness of ability in Christ for his work ; there is a fulness of power and sufficiency in him : a man may be very fit for a work, and yet want ability for it. The man under the law, that was nearest of kin to redeem the mortgaged estate or inheritance, was the fittest person, but then he was not always able to do it : let us then see if there be not a fulness of ability in Christ. There is these things that plainly make it evident. As, *1st*, He is the Father's choice, and surely the Father would never have chosen an insufficient person for so great a work : a king when he chooses a minister of state, may take care that he puts none in but a sufficient person, but he may many times be mistaken or otherways byassed ; but it is not so here : God the Father would never have chosen any hand, but such as would go through with the work ; he would never have put such trust in Christ, but that he knew well he was able to go through with it. But then *2dly*, The Son's consent to the choice makes it evident. Why ; will any rational man undertake an enterprize that he has not a sufficiency for ? Will a man be caution for another man's debts, when he knows that they amount to more than all he hath is worth ? Thus it may some times be among men, but our Lord Jesus Christ would never have undertaken the interest of his Father's glory, and the elect's salvation, if he had not known his own ability for his work ; *he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. I have laid help upon One that is mighty to save ; one that is law-bidding, one*
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that is sufficient to answer all the demands that can be made upon him by the justice of God, or by the broken law. But,

Thirdly, There is a fulness of wisdom and knowledge in Christ; *Colos. ii. 3. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* As he is God, he has an absolute knowledge; he is omniscient and knows all things and all persons; he knew them before they had a being, he knew them when they were in their mother's womb; yea, when they were in the womb of the hidden decree, he knew all their thoughts, all their words, all their purposes, all their actions, all the motions and ends of their actions; he knows all their secret purposes and designs. Men may very artfully conceal their secret intentions from the world, but it is in vain to imagine they can be so concealed from Christ: all the glossy dress men may put upon their actions, can no more cover the will of the action from Christ, no more than a piece of transparent glass can keep out the beams of the sun. He is the great revealer of secrets, and is very fit for his work, for he was upon all the Father's councils and designs; there was not one branch of that great plot of redemption, but he was an eye and ear witness to it; he was an active witness in the matter. Here is encouragement to gracious souls, exercised with their darkness and blindness of heart and mind. Why? Here is a perfection of wisdom, and a fulness of knowledge, and light in Christ; and therefore when the Christian sits down with the Bible in his hand, or to hear the truths of the gospel, they may read on, and hear on, but if there be not a looking up to Christ for light, the Bible is a sealed book, and discourses are but sounds of words: Therefore the Christian cries out, The Bible without its Author will not do: The learned commentaries upon it will not do, without the Interpreter *who is one among a thousand*: The original language will not do: And whenever there is a practical case of conscience, they take that case, and lay it in the ballance, with a trembling hand; yea, they desire that God may hold it himself, fearing that some branch of self or other, may
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give a wrong byas and turn to that scale ; in such a case, they look to Christ, that has a fulness of wisdom to do it for them. But then,

Fourthly, There is a fulness of truth in Christ ; a fulness of truth with respect to the law, both with respect to the commands, and with respect to the threatnings of the law : he fulfilled the commands of the law on the one hand, and he suffered the penalty of the law on the other. All the promises they centre in him, even in this full Christ ; the types are all fulfilled in him, he is the true Temple, he is the true Vail, he is the true High-priest, he is the true Burnt-offering : there is a fulfilment of all these things in him. He is the subject-matter of the gospel, he is the substance of gospel truth ; yea, he is the revealer and publisher of gospel truth : here is encouragement to the church, to know what a fulness of truth is in Christ, when errors prevail, when damnable heresy abounds in dreggy-days, when there are departures from the truth, when there is a corrupting of the truth, when there is a *holding*, (detaining, or as it may be rendered, *imprisoning*) *the truth in unrighteousness* ; yet here is encouragement, the church's Head is the truth, however empty the church may be of truth ; however stuffed with error and corrupt principles, yet here is encouragement to the saints faith : When they go through the church seeking truth, and finding none, yet there is a fulness of all truth in the church's glorious Head and Representative, even in our glorious and ever-blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

Fifthly, There is a fulness of grace in Christ ; there is a fulness of habitual grace in Christ ; the divine nature is the great fountain of grace, the human nature is the receptacle, the divine repository of this grace ; and it is the original instrument by which that grace is emptied into the hearts of the sinners. We say, there is a fulness of grace in him, there is life, and life in abundance in him ; there is a fulness of comforting grace in him, he waters the plants at the root ; there is a fulness of establishing grace in him, in shaking and try-
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ing times, when professions of religion are like so many trees shaking before the wind, and when they are going sometimes to one side, and sometimes to another, there is establishing grace in him to hold them fast at the root : there is preventing grace in him, there is supporting and strengthening grace in him ; the poor creature would soon yield upon the very touch of a temptation, the very aspect of a temptation would drive the Christian soldier from his posture, were it not the strengthening grace that is lodged in his glorious Head ; when the soul is ready to sink, its head is carried above water, by this strengthening grace. There is strengthening grace in him for duties ; when the burthen of duties lies heavy upon the poor creatures shoulders, then comes in the full Mediator, and shuts in his shoulder, and eases the poor creature of his burthen, and it is made light unto him. There is a fulness of comforting grace in him ; whatever be the conduit-pipe of comfort for the believer, Christ is the fountain ; as for their spiritual comfort, he alone is the author of it : God has lodged all the believer's joys in Christ, and such a fulness of grace is in him, that he has obtained of the God of all grace, all the graces of the Spirit. Thus, we say, there is a fulness of grace in him, in point of gracious qualifications ; a fulness of grace in him, in point of measure and degree. Further there is a fulness of grace in Christ to enable and strengthen the soul, to the hardest pieces of the Christian's work ; there is a fulness of efficacious grace in Christ, to bring the soul into the new ways of grace ; there is a fulness of grace in him, that enables the dying saint to take a grip of a full Mediator ; there is a fulness of grace in him to enable the believer in all the immediate acts of grace.

Sixthly, There is a fulness of example in Christ ; he is the complete pattern of all the Christians that have trod in the way to heaven since *Abel's* day ; the complete pattern to the church, other patterns they may have, but they are imperfect ; many a wrong step is in their way to heaven, and in their best written copies
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there are blots, or at least ill spellings : we must follow these patrons by way of humiliation, but we must follow Christ's pattern by way of absolute imitation. Why? Because he is the most perfect and complete pattern; there is an absolute confluence of all graces in him; but these imperfect patrons, though they had all grace, yet would they be but imperfect patrons, when compared to our blessed and glorious Mediator.

Seventhly, There is a fulness of authority in him; Christ is cloathed and invested with an absolute power to discharge the trust committed to him: he is called the *Father's Servant*, which plainly implies the command that the Father has given him. Believers, remember it, however much be in Christ, if there had been wanting this qualification of authority and power, then he would have had no commission to have done what he hath done; and consequently we would have had no benefit by a Redeemer; and therefore the Christian may plead with God after this manner in prayer, saying, That he is pleading nothing but what Christ has authority and commission to give; *Isa. lxi. 1. 2. 3. 4. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, &c.* It is by the Father's appointment that he is made the great teaching Rabbi of the church; it is by the Father's appointment that he is made *the High-priest over the house of God*; it is by the Father's command that he is made *King in mount Zion*: all that he did or suffered was in prosecution of the Father's instructions.

Eighthly, There is a fulness of acceptation in Christ; he is the accepted of the Father, and we are accepted only in him who is the Beloved. This was proclaimed once and again out of heaven, not by an Angel; no, the matter was more weighty, God was messenger himself, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.* I have accepted of him for himself, and of the church through him: What was the meaning of all the sacrifices under the law, but to shadow out this great, this sweet smelling-sacrifice? It was said by the *Jewish* writers, that it was a token of the divine acceptance,

ceptance, when the smoke went up straight to heaven, without being blown aside to any hand by any wind: they were types of the great reconciling sacrifice, that was to be offered up in the fulness of time, and therefore it is said, *to give rest to God*, so to speak. Upon sin's entering into the world, God's peace was like to be disturbed; he rested and was refreshed in the first creation, but he received more rest, and a far greater satisfaction, after the work of the new creation was finished: the worth of that sacrifice restored unto God whatever was lost by man's transgression. There is acceptance in Christ the Messiah; the Spirit testifies so much. The Spirit of God would not have come down in a Gospel dispensation, if the Father had not approved of what Christ did. The answer of prayer plainly demonstrates that he is well pleased with Christ; yea, his being well pleased with sinners, says he is extremely well pleased with Christ. You see how he is brought into heaven; says justice and holiness; take the Mediator by the hand, and wait upon him to the throne, and he is set upon the Father's right hand; but he had never come there, if he had not been fully accepted of the Father. You know when *Adam* sinned, paradise could not keep him any longer; so, if Christ had not satisfied justice, heaven could not have received him. His person is accepted; yea, he is so much accepted, that in and through him who is the Beloved are we accepted. God was well pleased with us in the first *Adam*, as he saw his own image on us; but it is another kind of acceptance that he entertains believers with, for the second *Adam's* sake. Do not talk of your own vileness and unworthiness, for it is not for your own sake, but for the Son of his love's sake that you are accepted. God passeth by all the unpleasant things that are about believers, his own children; whenever he gets his eye set upon the slain Lamb, he both forgives and forgets all the injuries done him by believers, and fully accepts them in Christ. There is a fulness of merit in the Mediator's righteousness, he gave himself an offering; he

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went up to the highest pinnacle of active obedience, he went down to the lowest offering in the ceremonial law, in point of obedience; he gave himself a sacrifice unto the death, to answer the threatening of the law; he poured out his blood, which was of infinite value; there was an infinite worth in his sufferings, because of the dignity of his person; they carried the image of a kingdom upon them all: *There* was the righteousness of Christ, *there* was the blood of God, *there* was the life of God; now what deformities cannot the righteousness of Christ cover? The mercy is larger than the two tables of stone, the Mediator's righteousness is broader than the mountains of the elect's guilt, the mercy-seat is broader than the broken law; and is not that sufficient to buy more worlds than one? The blood of Christ is sufficient to make a large laver for the dipping and plunging of guilty souls. The Apostle knew well enough on what foundation he stood, when he hang out the flag of defiance against all adversaries: the ocean of merit is deep, and therefore when mountains of guilt are cast one upon another, they will be as soon hid, and as far down in this ocean as the least particle of sand. Who can condemn? Justice cannot; for he is already condemned; the law cannot condemn, for it is a condemned thing; sin cannot condemn, for he hath condemned sin in the flesh; Christ will not condemn, for he died to absolve the condemned; the graceless world they may condemn, but they will only condemn one another; for now the saint can say, that there is a supreme Judge who can set all things right; and Satan he may condemn them, but what is that to the point, he is *the accuser of the brethren*, and he is ever busy in condemning them; he is the executioner of heaven, and he will judge and condemn the sinner, but let him do it, though the law condemn, though conscience condemn, though sin condemn, though the graceless world condemn, though the Devil condemn, yet he is not Christ-condemned, there is a fulness of merit in the righteousness of Christ for them.

Ninthly,

Ninthly, There is a fulness of love in Christ, there is a fulness of mercy in him, *the grace of our Lord is exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*. The believer's sin has many dimensions, Christ's love is all dimensions; Does the believer's sin reach up to heaven? Christ's love is as high: Does the believer's sin bring him as low as hell? Christ's love is below even that, to raise him up again; the unction of the Holy Ghost is upon him, *The Holy Ghost descends upon him like a dove*: Why, what is the meaning of that? The dove is an innocent harmless creature, remarkable and observable for its tenderness and love to its mate; well, *the Holy Ghost descends upon him like a dove*, pointing out the Spirit's fitting him with all kindly and loving dispositions towards sinners. What shall be said of this love? there is a fulness of mystery in it; here is one who is a Spirit, and yet shed blood to redeem the world! Here is one whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, and yet contain'd in the womb of a Virgin! In his sanctification, never was there a father more angry, and yet better pleased; angry with him as he stood in the sinner's room and stead, but well pleased with him as he was the eternal Son of his love, in whom he was ever well pleased.

Tenthly, To add no more, there is a fulness of glory in Christ; there is a fulness of essential glory in him, as he is the second person of the glorious Trinity; there is a fulness of mediatory glory in him, as he is God-man; and so interpreters understand, *John xvii. 5. And now Father, glorify me with thine own self, with that glory which I had with thee before the world was*. What is his glory as God-man? Why, may you say, What glory could he have as God-man, before he took flesh? You know, among men, when a person is chosen to an office of honour, there is a kind of glory and honour put upon him, from the very time of his election; whenever he is instated in the office, there is an honour put upon him after the new election; the general when chosen, tho' he goes
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not out then to war, yet there is a kind of honour paid him, as he is the king's general elected. Now, may we speak of that full subject after the manner of men? The Father past a predestination act upon the Son, to be God-man in the fulness of time, and he consented to it; and when it was past, the Son appeared as a Mediator elected: He was espoused to human nature, and he had a fulness of Mediatory glory from eternity, and he has it still. Yea, the human nature has received an addition of glory that it never had before; the human nature is now taken in to be a fellow of that glorious society: to speak with reverence, the human nature is now in the midst of the throne, it has now a croud of bending angels worshipping before it. There is a fulness of manifestative glory in Christ; yea, there is such a fulness of glory in Christ the Mediator, that he puts a particular crown on the heads, and a particular song in the mouths of all believers. Yea, there is such a fulness of glory in Christ, that he has a fulness of glory to bestow on every believer; yea, such a fulness of glory in him, that he has set each of them upon a throne, and given each of them palms in their hands. Well may it be said, that fulness, *fulness* and *all fulness dwelleth in Christ*.

II. The second thing in the method, was to give you some of the properties of this fulness; we shall name a few.

First, This fulness is a transcendent fulness; it transcends all thoughts, all praises, all expressions; it transcends all human accounts, quite transcends all scripture accounts, even when we have got into the depth of fulness that scripture does unfold.

Secondly, It is a comprehensive fulness; it comprehends the fulness of all creatures, it comprehends the fulness of all relations, it comprehends the fulness of all divine names and titles.

Thirdly, It is a communicative fulness; a fulness not of the streams, though never so true, but of the fountain:

tain : the more noble and excellent a creature is, the more communicative it is of its excellencies : the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of Righteousness, is very communicative of his fulness, and therefore he is represented by the oil that was poured upon the head of the high-priest, that went down to the skirts of his garments.

Fourthly, It is a suitable fulness ; it is suitable to the creature, it is suitable to the necessity of the precious soul ; a full table is a very suitable thing to a hungry man, a full cup of water is a very suitable thing to a thirsty man : here is in this fulness every thing suitable to the particular necessity of a soul ; here is bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothing to the naked.

Fifthly, It is a satisfying fulness ; it is a fulness that will satisfy the soul that is always crying, Give, give ; nothing will stop the mouth of such a soul but Christ's fulness : the soul is dissatisfied with itself, and it has received a disgust from a whole creation : but here is in Christ, to satisfy the desires of a craving soul ; here is a fulness in Christ to satisfy the dissatisfied soul, a fulness in Christ to satisfy the doubts of a soul, to answer all the objections of a soul, that may thrust in betwixt a believer and his joys ; here are objections drawn from guilt, drawn from the vileness of the heart, drawn from the broken law ; but here is a fulness in Christ to answer all these objections.

Sixthly, It is an overflowing and all-sufficient fulness ; it is not the fulness of a cistern, but it the fulness of a fountain ; and not only the fulness of a fountain, but the fulness of a broad ocean. You have a remarkable expression of the all-sufficient nature of this fulness in the second Command, *And keeping mercy unto thousands of them that love me* : Here there is supposition made, that if the world should stand a thousand generations, (but it is far from having stood an hundred yet,) there is such an overflowing fulness in the heart of God in Christ towards mankind sinners, that there would be mercy and grace lying in treasure for the last year of the thousand generations, as much as for the first year thereof.

thereof. Thus it is an overflowing, and an everflowing fulness.

Seventhly, and lastly, It is an inexhaustible and undrained fulness; in the ocean there may possibly be a way made through it, but it is not so here, there is an eternal overflow, an everlasting spring-tide of free grace in Christ; for as many saints as have received of this fulness, were they to spend an eternity on earth, what demands would they make on this fulness; and take a view of the treasure of glory above, and put all that together, surely it would be a great mass, a vast deal of grace, and yet the fountain of grace remains as full as ever. It is such an inexhaustible fulness, the Patriarchs, both before and after the flood, that lived so long, what demands did they make upon this fulness? but there was no hazard of their making such demands on it, as to make it the least diminished, such is the inexhaustible nature of it.

III. The third thing in the method, was the reasons of the doctrine, which we pass, and come to the improvement.

First, Is it so then, that it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell in Christ? then let us entertain good thoughts of the Father, after that we heard that Christ is so full, and so full to an overflow: But pray, Who was it that filled him with it? Was it not the Father? Yea, it was him that qualified him, it was his Father that gifted him, that fitted and furnished him for his work: You think much of the Son's love, and you have good reason so to do; but is there not as good reason to think much of the Father's love, who communicated the mediatory fulness to Christ, by an act of his own good-will and pleasure.

Secondly, Admire the love of Christ, that though he be full, and so full, yet he reckons the church to be a piece of his fulness; yea, he would not reckon much of all the fulness of his Father's house, if he wanted but one joint of a finger of his mystical body; he would

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never

never think the communion table above in mount Zion to be fully furnished, if so much as a *Joseph* or a *Benjamin* were wanting at it; and is not that great love, that he should so esteem of you believers?

Thirdly, Let us hence learn the misery of them that are out of Christ; let them be never so full of what themselves and a blind world reckon fulness, yet they want a full Christ: we pronounce you empty creatures, though full of the things of this world; in the midst of that fulness you are miserable: Are you rich? Well, in the midst of your riches you are poor: Why? because you want a full Christ; all things in the world are but like so many cyphers wanting a figure, if Christ be wanting: What is a full table, a full family of children, a full cup of this world's pleasures, wanting a full Christ? The Spirit of God pronounces them empty creatures. Learn then the prodigious folly and madness of them that are taken up with the things of a perishing world, and despise a full Christ; fools they are, when they may have substance to feed upon, and yet take up themselves with the empty husks. The folly of the world is just like the folly of children, pursuing after the butterfly; How do they strain themselves in the pursuit, and in the turning up and down after it? and when they have got it, off flies the gilded wings, and they have nothing but a worm. *Solomon* tells us, *Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.* This book of *Ecclesiastes* signifies wisdom, because *Solomon*, after his vain courses, began and gathered wisdom. What are the most part of the world doing? They are just like a man that dreamed of a great deal of treasure on the top of an hill, he calls his neighbours, and they come, and get up to the top of the hill, but they find no treasure, the man looks back and sees his fellow-creatures scrambling on the hill, crys out, Fools, we are all beguiled, there is no treasure here: Their folly must be great, like children taken with the beautiful colours of the rainbow, they think if they were at such a place they would be at the end of it, but when they are there, they are as far from

from it as when they first set out after it ; so it is with the children of this world, they are pursuing from mountain to mountain, and from hill to hill, seeking satisfaction, but find it not.

Fourthly, Was it the Father's pleasure to lodge all fulness in Christ? then see hereby the church's salvation fully secured. Had that work been put in any other hand, but in his, we had still been in fear and terror ; but when there is such a fulness lodged in Christ, to recover a lost elect world, then the work shall be carried on effectually, and shall not miscarry. We might go on, and shew you, that they who have an interest in Christ, have all things ; but we must proceed to another use of the doctrine, which is an use of exhortation.

Is it so then, that there is a fulness and all fulness in Christ ; then let us all be exhorted to embrace this full Christ ; let us be exhorted, by faith to renew this full Redeemer, and all this fulness shall be ours : all to whom the joyful sound of our text reacheth, are called, invited, yea, and charged to embrace this full Christ. You that are wandering upon the mountains of vanity, the gospel call is to you, *Come away from Lebanon, my sister, my spouse*. You that have been sinking in miry places ; you that have been drinking at the world's well, that soon goes dry, lapping at the world's puddle, the sinful pleasures thereof, gaping at the world's honours and perferments ; you that have been feeding upon the husks, you are called this day to come and taste of these choice fruits, you that have been sucking blood from the world's breasts, come now and drink of those choice wines ; pray come, drop off like a waned child from the world's poisoned breasts. Diseased souls come to Christ, here is a fulness of healing grace, a fulness of medicinal grace for all your plagues, for all your sores, though they have run never so long ; come home to the Physician at last, who has his hand full of cures.

Bankrupt sinners come to Christ ; sinners drowned in

debt to the law and to the justice of God, and has not wherewith to pay, come and imbrace a full Cautioner, a full, and a well qualified Surety, who will pay all your debts, and that freely ; he requires nothing with you, but that you would take all freely : and be emptied of self and self-righteousness, and self-sufficiency, and *come and buy without money and without price* ; come to Christ that he may give you the fit emptyness, come to him, that he may empty you of sin and of a present world ; come to him, that he may empty you of a legal spirit, and do not say, We would come, if we had wherewith to come ; do not say, How can I take a full Christ, that is so full of guilt ? If you stay away till you be emptied of sin, you will never come to him ; that full Christ must empty your soul of sin. If you were to get a full estate for the going to such a place, you would soon run, then there would be no objections made : You are called upon infinitely surer grounds to accept of a full Christ, and therewith to take all, even all he is, all he has, and all that he has done, for sinners : Then do you take Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; then do you take a full covenant ; then do you take all the blessings of the covenant ; then will you be able to say of every branch of this fulness, This is mine. If you say you would come to Christ, but guilt lies in the way ; well, here is a priest to expiate guilt ; accept of a full Christ, and you will gain a change of raiment ; if you say you are under the power of corruption ; why, here is a King to subdue and break all your lusts. Come then, and remember you have had an invitation. Pray, consider what report shall be made of you this night afterward, when you have sitten this call ; Must not the answer be, That after a full Christ was offered unto you, you refused ? Behold ! he is standing at your door this day, ready to come in, and he will bring in all his fulness with him to you. He who stands at the door of the palace every day, knocking and demanding entrance, is particularly standing in this cottage at present ; he is standing on this spot of ground this day in
the

the midst of you; he is offering himself to every soul of you within the sound of these words; he is using arguments with you, and he is weeping over you; and if you ask him, Why weepest thou? his answer would be, Because they would not accept of me, and receive of my fulness: he who stands to-day, will ere long stand no more, and knock no longer. If you this day refuse a full Christ, you refuse a full cup of blessings; and not only so, but you will procure to yourselves a full cup of the Mediator's unmixt vengeance, which you shall drink through eternity. Come then and take the robe of his righteousness, that you may not stand naked before God in the great day; consider the call made, and the danger of refusing it.

Why, remember ere long all this assembly will stand in another place, and God will pose the conscience of every one of you, man, woman, in such a day you were called to take hold of the covenant, and of a full Christ in the covenant, and you refused: Was there not a treaty of peace set on foot between Christ and you, and ye refused to accept of the treaty? Must not the confounded creature answer, That I refused a full Christ. Well the God of heaven is treating with you this day, about the things of eternity, and where will you hide your heads that day? O will you at last be wise, and consider that he out-bids all other merchants for your souls, as *Saul* in an insulting manner said, *Can the son of Jesse give you fields and vineyards as I can do?* So well may God say, Can the riches and pleasures of the world give you that satisfaction that I and my Son can give?

Now, may the Lord determine you to make a wise choice, and to his glorious name be praise. *Amen.*

S E R M O N I I I.

BEING THE

AFTERNOON'S SERMON,

By the Rev. Mr. THOMAS BOSTON.

I PETER ii. 25.

For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

WE have heard of the straying state of poor sinners out of Christ, and also of the recovery and return of the poor strays; there remains yet another part of our text, namely, How the returned strays are disposed of. The remains of the straying humour that is yet in the returned strays (especially considering that they are yet in the wilderness of this world, in the midst of so many dangers and snares) is ready to make their hearts faint, especially when they consider their own liableness to mismanagements, and the dangers that may come upon them thereby, but our text tells us *they are returned to the Bishop of their souls*; they are put under the care and inspection of the great Shepherd, even the Lord Jesus Christ. The same divine grace that returned the strays, puts them under the care, oversight, and inspection of the great Shepherd of the sheep. Thus they are safe under his hand for the future.

The doctrine I propose from this part of the words is this,

DOCT. *That the returned strays are, by divine grace, put under the hand, care and oversight of the great Shepherd.*

Our

Our Lord Jesus Christ has the inspection of them for the future, this is the way they are disposed of upon their return.

In speaking to this doctrine, I shall endeavour briefly to open up these three things.

- I. How they are put under the hand, care and oversight of the great Shepherd.
- II. Why they are put under his hand.
- III. Wherein he exerts his power over them that are put under his hand.
- IV. And lastly, apply.

I. As to the first, you may take these few things for explication.

First, Jesus Christ is the Shepherd appointed by the Father; he is the good Shepherd of the sheep by divine appointment; *Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd.* Though in respect of the divine nature, he is the Father's equal and fellow, yet as Mediator, he is the Father's servant; *Isa. xlii. 1. Behold my Servant whom I uphold, mine Elect in whom my soul delighteth.* He has invested him with the office of the Shepherd of the flock, that he may feed all them that are to be found on the high and holy hill, through eternity, *viz.* the elect.

Secondly, They are delivered over to his hand in the day of conversion; *John xvii. 6. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me.* Here is two different givings in the text, *These thou gavest me, I have manifested thy name unto them: Thine they were, and thou gavest them me,* seems to have a respect to the delivering them over to him in time; for, from all eternity, were they delivered over to him in point of final possession.

Thirdly, Consider the whole care is rolled over on the Shepherd; *John v. 22. For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.*
Eph.

Eph. i. 22. *And hath put all things under his feet, and hath given him to be head over all things to the church.* He is not only constitute their Shepherd, but their Overseer; whereby the whole concerns of the flock are rolled over upon him: on him it lies, as the Captain of Salvation, to bring many souls to glory. The chief care of the whole family lies upon him, as he is the steward of the house; therefore says the Apostle Peter, *Casting all your care upon him, who careth for you.* In the time of life, free grace comes in, brings home the strays, and returns them back from their wandering, and leaves them with the Shepherd; and in effect says, Now Shepherd, see you to them, from this time forward.

Fourthly, This great and good Shepherd is answerable for all the flock, so that none of them may be lost; *John vi. 39. This is the Father's will, that of all that he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.* This then, is the nature of the charge, and therefore we find him making his account in *John xvii. 12. Those that thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them is lost.* God the Father hath given all the returned strays to Christ, and saith to him, the account of the number must be made up, against that day in which I make up my jewels; As *Laban said to Jacob, At thy hand shall they be required;* so said the Father to Christ.

II. The second thing, *viz.* Why are the returned strays put under Christ's hand. These few things will set this in its due light.

First, They are dear bought, and so must not be lost: The returned strays were a great price, and a great pains ere they were brought back: For why? every returned stray is the price of blood, even the precious blood of Christ. They are also the product of great pains; it cost his own Spirit a great deal of pains to bring them back, and if they should be lost, the pains would be lost also.

Secondly,

Secondly, They are both weak and witlefs, and would certainly lofs, if left to their own management; 2 Cor. iii. 5. *Not that we are fufficient of ourfelves to think any thing at of ourfelves: but our fufficiency is of God.* The fubtile Serpent would foon outwit them, if left to themfelves but for a moment.

Thirdly, The Mediator's hand is fure, and they cannot be loft; *None fhall be able to pluck them out of my hand.* We have heard of the fulnefs of Chrift the great Shepherd to-day, and of his fitnefs for that work; it was upon his abfolute fitnefs for the work, that the Father made choice of him, and put the returned ftrays into his hand.

III. The third thing in the method was, To fhew you wherein the great Shepherd exerts his care over the returned ftrays, which are put under his care and oversight. And we fhall confider this, *1ft*, With refpect to the flocks going in this lower world, And *2dly*, Their going on the high and holy hill above.

Firft, With refpect to their going in this prefent world, there are thefe few things. As,

1ft, He feeds them; *Ifa. iv. 11. He fhall feed his flock like a shepherd.* And there are two things to be confidered here. As 1. He gives them the green paftures to eat, he makes them lie down in the green paftures, *Pfal. xxiii.* And what is that food, but a God in Chrift, and with him all good things: It is to feed on, and lie down in the green paftures, that can never be eaten bare; the paftures that never wither, but are ever green, through all the periods of time and eternity. 2. He gives them the ftill waters to drink; and what is that but the water of the fountain of life, fpoken of, *Rev. xxi. 6. I will give unto him that is athirft, to drink, of the fountain of the water of life freely.* It is even the enjoyment of a God in Chrift, held forth in the gospel promifes: Waters that makes no noife to fright away the fheep, as the voice of the law does, while it cries. Thus their fouls are fed, but

does the good shepherd take no care of the bodies of the returned strays? Yes; he provides for them also; *Isa. xxxiii. 16. He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks, bread shall be given him, and his water shall be sure.* They shall be fed abundantly, and that in straitened times, altho' the world shall not know how, and should wonder how they are fed; *Psal. xxxvii. 19. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.* A little to them that are within the inclosure goes far, for there is a blessing in it; while greater things to them that are without, goes but a short way, because of the curse that is in it, which blasts it to them.

2dly, He leads them; he calls his sheep by name, he calls them out of their straying places, they that are still straying, in point of wildness, and will not be led. The sheep are still in the wilderness, but he is their guide, he will guide them all their life; *Psal. xlviii. 14. For this God is our God,—he will be our guide even unto death.* He will guide them by his word, they shall hear a voice behind them, saying, *This is the way walk ye in it.* He will guide them by his providence, he will chalk out the way to them, according to and in consistence with the word.

3dly, He heals them; *Ezek. xxxiv. 16. I will strengthen that which is sick.* The returned strays, while in this world, may pine away with sickness; they may be weakned and sore wounded, both with temptations and afflictions; they may be bruised with sore and heavy diseases, following too much their own will and way, by their own unwatchfulness, and if there were no healing to them, they would pine away in their diseases; but they are put under the hand of the good Shepherd; he is their overseer, and so their sickness cannot prove a sickness unto death; *Jer. xxx. 17. —I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord.* And for as low as the returned strays may be brought, the time shall

shall be when they shall sing, as in *Psalms* ciii. *Bless the Lord, O my soul, who healeth all thy diseases.*

4thly, He provides shelter for them against the storm ; a resting place for them in the heat of the day ; *Cant. i. 7. Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.* However violent the storm may be, the Shepherd will see to their repose ; *In the world they shall have tribulation, but in the end they shall have peace :* And many a time the people of God have had it to say, That they never had greater calm of spirit, nor greater satisfaction of mind in the world, than in a time of persecution and tribulation for the cause of Christ ; in the time of public calamity they shall have chambers of protection. But then,

5thly, He reclaims them from their partial wanderings : Sometimes even the returned strays are driven away through the violence of a temptation ; there is a straying disposition that they are never perfectly cured of, so long as they are in this lower world, and herein they imitate the silly sheep, when turned away they cannot turn themselves again ; but the good shepherd will seek them, and bring them back again ; *Ezek. xxxiv. 12. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered ; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places, where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.*

6thly, He keeps them, so that none of them shall perish ; *John x. 28. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.* They are set beyond the reach of the condemning law ; *For there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, for they are not under the law but under grace.* Although indeed the Father's anger may smoke against the sheep of his pasture, yet no arrows of the curse fly within the inclosure where the returned strays are feeding ; *Gal. iii. 13. Christ hath re-*

deemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.

But now a word to the *second* thing on this head, viz. their going on the holy hill above. And,

1st, He brings them safely there, he carries them safely through the dark shadows of death, *Psal. xxiii.*

4. The good Shepherd will not leave the sheep in the pit of extremity, but he will perfect the return of the strays; *Isa. xxxv. 10. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

2^{dly}, He feeds them; *Rev. vii. 17. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.* There they shall be completely happy; there is no dark nor cloudy day in Immanuel's land; there will be no marks of their straying condition; there they have liberal pastures, and none of them complain of want.

I now close with a word of application. And *first* to the souls that are yet straying, for all that they have heard of the fulness of Christ, and will not come to him that they may have life. Sirs, what I would say to you, is, Behold the happiness of the returned strays! Behold their happiness, and follow after them, and come to Christ. Sirs, these things are not cunningly devised fables, but the weighty truths of the gospel, which we require you, and every one of you to believe upon the authority of divine revelation.

1st, Is your rock like their rock? No, no; *Deut. xxxii. 31. For their rock is not as our rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.* What have they to listen to, in comparison of the Shepherd of *Israel*, which we have to lay all our weight upon, both for time and for eternity? Sinner, if you will not leave off your straying, let me tell you, that whatever you trust unto, it will be like the broken reed of *Egypt*, to which if a man
leap,

lean, it will pierce his hand, and you will find yourself in a friendless condition. But,

2dly, Behold their happiness, and say, Have they not made a good choice? Have they not now exchanged for the better? Are they not now well away from under the power of Satan? Are they not well away from among the Devil's strays upon the mountains of vanity? And are they not now well among Christ's flock, and feeding on the green pastures? Are they not well away from out of the Devil's common? And are they not well and safe now where they are within God's inclosure?

3dly, Behold their happiness, and follow after them, for yet there is room; *Zech. viii. 23. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you.* Sirs, the door of the sheep-fold yet stands open, enter in quickly, lest ye fall a straying and die in the pit, and be put beyond recovery.

Secondly, A word to the returned stray. Here is *first* comfort, and *secondly* duty for you.

First, Here is comfort to the returned strays in two cases which reacheth you all.

1st, Here is one particular cause of comfort, *Psal. xxiii. 1. The Lord is your Shepherd, and you shall not want*; however hard you may be put to at any time, yet you shall be supplied. Alas! the poor strays can do nothing for themselves, but your happiness is, that the Shepherd can do all for you, and can make good your part against all that can annoy you.

2dly, Here is comfort to you in the case of the church of God; she will fend come what will, she will wear out the storm: Whatever worldly wisdom or carnal police is used to misguide the church, yet the infinite wisdom and power of a Mediator is employed to guide her aright: Though the united power and policy of *Babylon* and *Edom* should attempt to raze *Jerusalem's* founda-

foundation, yet they may well fright the flock, they shall never be able to destroy them.

Secondly, Here is duty for you, and I shall also give you it in these two things.

1st, Trust him for your through-bearing, trust him for time and for eternity; trust him for counsel and conduct; trust him for strength and wisdom; trust him for all you want and need, for carrying you through the wilderness of this world, and for landing you safely in glory's land. But alas! may some say, I fear I never carry fairly through. Why? this I would heartily confess you might have said, if the returned strays had been left to their own hand; but how can you say it, when you are put under the hand, care, oversight and inspection of the great and good Shepherd; whatever you are, look not to yourselves, but look to him, trust not to yourselves, but to the grace that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord; and carefully and constantly ply your work: trust him for your bodies, and for whatever you need to them. In a word, come what will come, trust him for your daily bread, for even that you must have from him. But perhaps you will be saying, What will become of us, if enemies prevail, and if they get the carved work of reformation thrown down, and if the wells of salvation be puddled and fouled? Why, a thousand such things may come in thy mind, but trust thou in the Shepherd, if these tryals should come, and let him see to his own work, and to you both; for it concerns him: Lay yourselves over upon him, and the weight of a glorious reformation upon him, *on whose shoulders the government is laid, and whose name is the wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God*; for it lies upon his honour, by virtue of his office. But take you the advice given you by the great Apostle of the *Gentiles*, Phil. iv. 6. *Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.* The returned strays are Christ's sheep, and come what will come he will see to them. But then,

2dly,

2dly, Behave yourselves as the sheep of his pasture ; *Psal. c. 3. Know ye that the Lord he is God, it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves ; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Hear his voice, Psal. xcv. 7. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand ; to day if ye will hear his voice. See that ye follow him ; John x. 5. And a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him : for they know not the voice of strangers. Ver. 27. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.* Pretend not to guide yourselves ; beware of being found among the Devil's strays ; returned strays should walk even as the Shepherd walked, *1 Pet. ii. 21. For even hereunto are ye called : because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps :* Be fearful, be fruitful, be humble, be harmless, be of a meek and quiet disposition ; if so be that you have been shorn with the knife of affliction, and if the butcher's knife should be your lot, as it hath been the lot of many of the people of God, in both this and other of the churches of Christ ; and who knows but it may be the lot of some of us here, before we land in Immanuel's land, where glory dwells ; even bid it welcome for the sake of the good Shepherd.

And the Lord that returned the strays, when they were as lost sheep going astray, and laid upon the Shepherd the iniquities of them all, even keep them while they are here in this wilderness, and carry them safely to Immanuel's land, and bless what hath been said, and to his glorious name be praise. *Amen.*

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